

Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Harbor Management Commission
Minutes - Thursday, January 23, 2014

The meeting was held at Town Hall and called to order by Chairperson Tom Ragonese at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Bill Leonard, Richard Lepore, Tom Mull and Tom Ragonese. Also present was Mike Hurley, Council Liaison, Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation and Dennis Walter, town resident.

A. Public Comments.

None.

B. Minutes – December 19, 2013.

Richard Lepore moved to approve the minutes of the December 19, 2013 meeting. The motion was seconded by Bill Leonard and approved unanimously.

C. Monthly Report – December 2013.

The Monthly Report was reviewed by board members. They discussed the success of Holidays on Main and Santa's Pancake Breakfast. Board members inquired about the status of the high school pool. Ms. Bagley reported that the indoor pool had high levels of chlorine and it was discovered that a mechanical part for the pool filter system was not operating properly. The school district had the part replaced, updated their testing equipment and hired a pool contractor to come in once a month to test water quality.

D. Letters and Announcements.

None.

E. Old Business.

1. Use of School Facilities During High School Renovation.

Ms. Bagley explained that school district staff have had meetings with her and members of her staff to discuss the availability of the high school facilities during the renovation. These meetings are held to discuss upcoming seasons. The next meeting will be held in January or early February to discuss spring programs. At that meeting, she will find out what outdoor fields or indoor facilities will be available for use by the Parks and Recreation Department. These meetings give her enough time to plan upcoming schedules for the different programs in town.

F. New Business.

1. Budget Process for Fiscal Year 2014-2015.

Chairperson Ragonese explained the budget process to board members. The Parks and Recreation Department develops a budget and submits it to the Town Manager. The Town Manager reviews it and then develops his budget and submits it to the Town Council. Town Councilor, Mike Hurley, said that the Town Council will review the budget with the Town Manager and department heads and they must approve the budget by May 15th. The Council will also determine the Capital Improvements projects for next year's budget too. Board members discussed some of the Parks and Recreation capital improvement projects and reviewed the list in the December 19, 2013 minutes. Board members discussed the cost of \$195,000 for paving of the Solomon Welles House parking lot. With the Farmer's Market on the house grounds, this parking lot gets a lot of use. Councilor Hurley suggested trying to fund this project by getting a portion of the funds needed each year in the Capital Improvement Budget. Then, over a period of years, get enough funds to complete this project. Chairperson Ragonese thought this suggestion was a great idea and board members agreed. Funding a project over several years made sense and they thanked Councilor Hurley for his suggestion.

2. Cove Boat Launch Fees.

Chairperson Ragonese discussed the current boat launch fees with members. They reviewed the Parks and Recreation Department's reports on the history of Wethersfield's fees, other boat launch fees in the area and the revenue generated by these fees. Chairperson Ragonese reported on Harbormaster Charlie Forsdick's suggestions for the fees. Board members felt the fees are still reasonable at this time, users get to launch in a protected cove to access the Connecticut River and the revenue generated from the fees is used to improve the facility. With the installation of the new docks in the future, they will consider fee changes after the completion of the project.

G. Board Member Comments.

Tom Mull asked about the Mill Woods Master Plan. He wanted to know if a new Master Plan would be developed in the near future. Ms. Bagley responded that a new plan can be developed, but the existing one still has recommendations not implemented at this time. Over the years, improvements have been made from the plan and some projects may not be undertaken because conditions have changed. One example is the Mill Woods Soccer field identified in the plan. This plan was completed before the High School Soccer/Football field was constructed with a synthetic surface. The need for a new soccer field is not as great a priority because this new field came on line.

H. Harbor Management Commission.

1. Proposal from Mr. Walter for a Permanent Dock System Attached to the Shore.

Chairperson Ragonese reviewed with Board members Mr. Walter's design for docks on his property. Harbormaster Forsdick recommended the approval of this design. He sent an email to Chairperson Ragonese and Ms. Bagley explaining that the docks would now be located entirely on Mr. Walter's riparian property, several feet south of the old location. The docks will be better secured at both the shore-side with an attachment to a bulkhead and at the water-ward end with two anchors. Mr. Walter explained that this system would be a better system to anchor his docks. Mr. Leonard moved to approve the design of Mr. Walter's dock system based on the recommendation of the Harbormaster. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lepore and approved unanimously.

2. Harbormaster Report.

Chairperson Ragonese reviewed the Harbormaster report. Board members received this report by email from Mr. Forsdick. Chairperson Ragonese discussed the status of the Harbormaster boat. He noted that Mr. Forsdick is looking to get the existing boat useable for the 2014 season while staff and the town manager are researching ways to fund a new boat.

Chairperson Ragonese noted that the Harbormaster is still looking for a deputy harbormaster. He encouraged commission members to publicize the position.

3. Boating Infrastructure Grant.

Ms. Bagley reported that she is waiting for the State to send her the contract for this project. She hopes to hear by the end of January.

4. Cove Channel Dredging.

Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley about the timetable for the dredging. The Army Corps of Engineers has awarded the contract for this project and anticipates the contractor working in February and March. Chairperson Ragonese asked if the dredging will go 24/7. Ms. Bagley did not know, but will check with the Army Corps and get back to Commission members. As soon as she hears from the Army Corps, she will send out an email to members.

I. Motion to Adjourn.

A motion was made by Bill Leonard and seconded by Rich Lepore to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen A. Bagley, Director
Parks & Recreation Department